

The Hartest Parish Plan

A village consultation





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List of organisations in Hartest that contributed a response as part of the consultation:

Art for All, Back Street Heroes Youth Club, Boxted and Hartest Institute Charity, Hartest and Boxted PCC, Hartest and District Women's Institute, Hartest Cinema, Hartest Pre-school, Hartest Primary School, Hartest Surgery, Neighbourhood Watch Scheme

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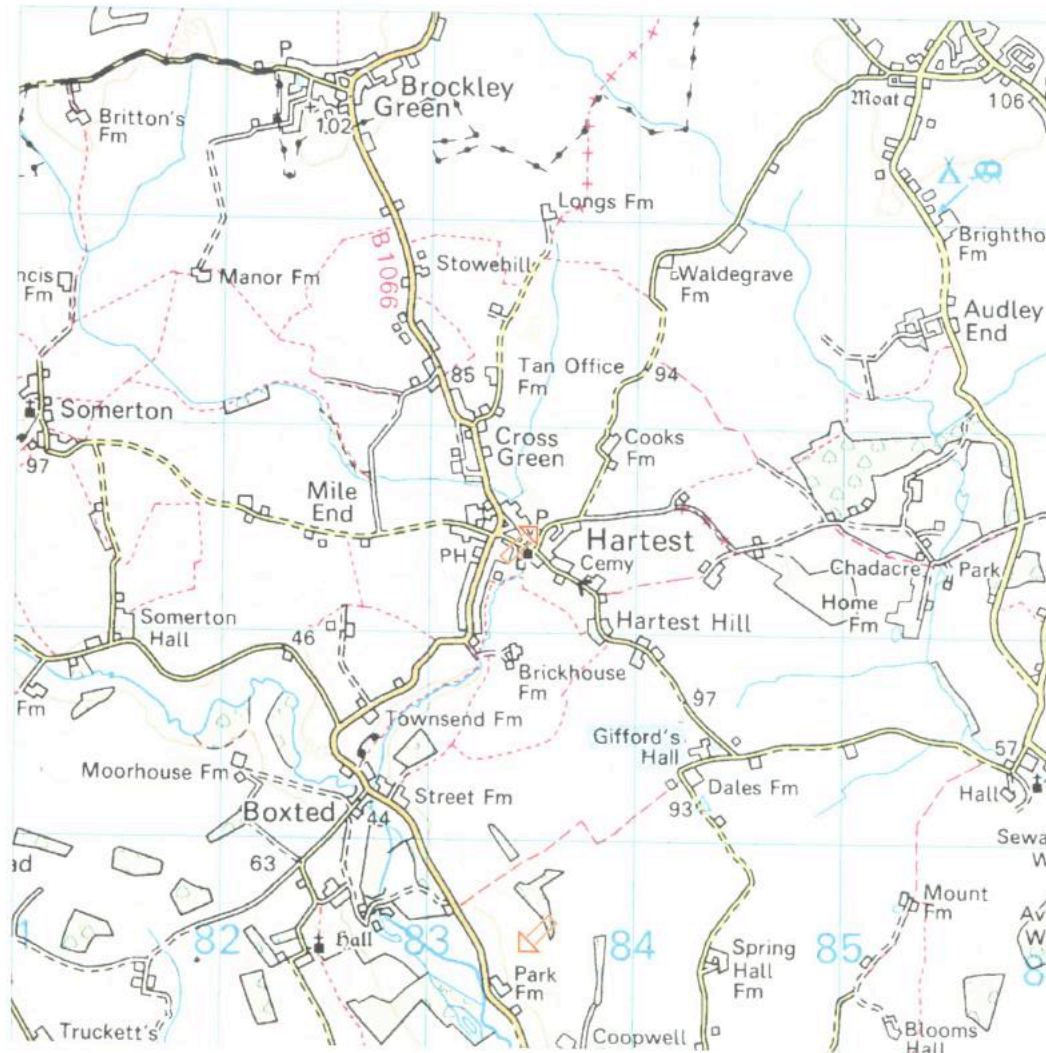
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Contents

The Parish of Hartest (map)	4
Statement from the Chairman of Hartest Parish Council	5
Introduction	7
Summary of Action Plan recommendations	8
Hartest - a description	10
How the project started & the activities of the Parish Plan Group	12
The aims of the Parish Plan	15
Consultation responses & development of the Action Plan	16
Social issues	
Leisure	
Community help and support	
Religion	
The school and the community,	
The Parish Council and local government	
Environmental issues	
Transport and communication	
The village environment	
Economic issues	
Business or work based in Hartest	
Retail and allied facilities	
Youth questionnaire	
Household questionnaire	
 The future	 34
 Appendices	
Appendix A - The questionnaires	36
Appendix A1 (The questionnaires with numerical responses)	
Appendix A2 (Summary of comments in questionnaires)	
 Appendix B - Timetable of events	 68



The Parish of Hartest



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Statement from the Chairman of Hartest Parish Council

At this time when "sustainable" communities should be at the forefront of our minds, the reality is often that of declining village communities. Therefore, it is not only timely but also very important to have our own Parish Plan.

A Parish Plan serves to highlight where we stand as a community and also endeavours to map out a path into the future. It would be only too easy to have a wish list. Sensibly, the Hartest Plan does not suggest that all its recommendations will be feasible immediately, but it does provide some clear guidance for future considerations.

The Parish Council would like to express their sincere thanks, particularly to the members of the Parish Plan Group for their work over the last two years in compiling this document. However, none of this would have been possible without the support and co-operation of the residents and associates of Hartest. Knowing that their views have been sought and may subsequently be acted upon can only enhance this fine village of ours.

James A B Long

16th January 2006

Introduction

Village life is changing - not just in Hartest but in small and large villages all over rural Suffolk and indeed throughout the UK. Some changes we may like, others perhaps not, but somehow they seem inevitable.

In the community, we are able to do something about it. We can be involved in the decisions that are made about the village and influence the trends that are taking place. Preparing a Parish Plan is a way of involving everyone in Hartest in making a contribution to the future of the village.

As part of its policies for local administration, the Government "wants local communities to take more control of their own lives, to say what they want doing in their own neighbourhoods and to engage with other powers to get it done". A Parish Plan is identified as a way of "helping you to find out what your local community wants and work out how to deliver it".

Babergh District Council has declared its commitment to taking the outcomes from Parish Plans into account when planning and delivering services. The Hartest Parish Council has shown its support for the development of the Hartest Parish Plan and has made a financial contribution to its cost.

The purpose of the Parish Plan is to:

- address the full range of social, economic and environmental issues
- consider issues in the short, medium and longer terms
- focus on ACTION to conserve, enhance and create, according to the circumstances

Summary of Action Plan recommendations

The background to the Hartest Parish Plan report, how the different stages of consultation were carried out and, in particular, the responses to the consultation process are described in some detail in the pages that follow. The recommendations listed below are the outcome of the consultation process and include suggested action for the future.

Social issues

Leisure

- To explore ways of extending the range of leisure activities and the development of sports facilities in the village

Community help and support

- To explore ways in which self-help can be extended in the village for the mutual benefit of residents

Religion

- To explore ways of making greater use of the Church, particularly for events such as concerts or art and craft displays

The school and the community

- To forge closer community links with the school by making greater use of its facilities and by encouraging Hartest residents to participate more in the work of the school

Parish Council and local government

- To use the Parish Plan as an opportunity to forge a closer working relationship between the Parish Council and the village, so that it can take forward some of the proposed recommendations with the people of the village

Environmental issues

Transport and communication

- To explore ways in which public and other shared transport schemes could be improved for the village and surrounding areas
- To draw attention to the lack of reliable mobile phone reception and find ways to encourage the improvement of this and other digital communications

The village environment

- To explore ways in which some low-cost housing could be provided within the village
- To explore ways in which schemes could be developed to reduce the impact of traffic and to make the village safer and more pleasant for pedestrians
- To inform the Parish Council of the views of village residents, as expressed in the questionnaire, concerning the development of any schemes in future to conserve, manage and use the Green
- To find ways of making greater use of alternative energy in the village and explore the feasibility of establishing a recycling centre and a compost unit
- To encourage the Suffolk County Council to take note of the various comments relating to footpaths within the village
- To explore the possibility of obtaining more land within the parish of Hartest to develop woodland for the benefit of the community

Economic issues

Business or work based in Hartest

- To explore the possibility of developing local business premises with some shared facilities that could also encourage a wider range of people into the village for employment

Retail and allied facilities

- To set up a Working Group to explore ways of establishing a community shop in Hartest including the viability of such a proposal
- To explore ways in which The Crown might become more involved in the development of further amenities in the village

Youth recommendations

Those arising out of responses on the youth questionnaires are referred to in the appropriate recommendations as listed above.



Hartest - a description

Hartest lies in West Suffolk at the north-western extremity of Babergh district, on the B1066 and midway between Bury St Edmunds and Sudbury. The larger villages of Glemsford, Lavenham and Long Melford are all within a six mile radius. The adjoining hamlets of Boxted and Somerton are closely linked with Hartest. A small river flows through Hartest from its source in Somerton.

The Green is at the heart of the village. Close to the Green are the medieval parish church of All Saints, the primary school, the Hartest and Boxted Institute, the doctors' surgery and the Crown public house. Two butcher's shops and the village garage also face the Green.

Beyond the Green, a ribbon of housing runs south along the Row towards Boxted and more scattered development extends northwards towards Bury St Edmunds and along the other roads radiating from the Green. The village includes two small areas of housing built by the former Melford Rural District Council. During the last thirty years a limited amount of private housing has been added but, in recent years, the amount of new development has been strictly controlled. The clearly defined centre encourages a strong sense of community within Hartest. The whole of the central part of the village, within a defined boundary, has been declared a Conservation Area.

In 1851 there were 832 inhabitants, a figure that by 1971 had declined to 290, reflecting an almost universal trend in rural East Anglia during that period. At the 2001 census, the population of the village had risen to 427, in approximately 190 households. Hartest has, until recently, been essentially agricultural in character, and indeed the

1871 census recorded 21 farmers and 109 agricultural labourers. Today only four active farms remain in the parish.

Today there is minimal employment within Hartest. A few residents work from home but the majority travel to Bury St Edmunds, Sudbury or further afield. This contrasts with the situation in previous generations. In William White's 1844 Directory of Suffolk, in addition to those directly involved in agriculture, the entry for Hartest included two grocers and drapers, a baker, five shoemakers, two tailors, a blacksmith, a saddler and harness maker, two corn millers, two carriers (each of whom provided a regular service to Bury and Sudbury), a builder and wheelwright, a farrier and two curates. Going further back, seventeenth century wills and inventories show that Hartest's population then included staplers, weavers, websters and woolcombers.

A bus service from Bury St Edmunds to Sudbury operates through the village from Monday to Saturday. The timetable is limited, with no evening service. The nearest railway stations are at Sudbury (with a branch service to Marks Tey on the Norwich to London main line), and Bury St Edmunds (on the route between Ipswich and Cambridge). Stansted Airport is 40 miles away.

The network of footpaths and bridle paths within the parish is enjoyed by many residents. In celebration of the turn of the century, during 1999 and 2000, a Millennium Wood was planted alongside the Lawshall Road. Within the wood a sculpture, by local artist Geoffrey Clarke, faces the rising sun on New Year's Day. The wood is owned by the Woodland Trust and maintained by residents of Hartest.

Hartest retains a number of key facilities. There is an active parish church, with a bell-ringing group and occasional choir, a thriving primary school (with associated pre-school and mother and toddler groups) and a doctors' surgery (a branch of the Glemsford practice). The very handsome and well used late Victorian Boxted and Hartest Institute (which has charitable status) acts as the village hall. It has recently undergone a major and sensitive refurbishment with the aid of a number of sources of funding, including a Heritage Lottery Fund grant.

Activity groups operating in the village include a branch of the Women's Institute, a Gardening Club, Youth Club, Carpet Bowls Club, classes for art and yoga, and now the Hartest Cinema. Another recent introduction has been annual visits to the Institute by the Eastern Angles and Theatre Royal Touring drama companies as part of their county-wide programmes.

Each August Bank Holiday Monday the Village Fete is held on the Green. This substantial event draws visitors from throughout the surrounding area and follows the tradition when, from 1789 until the late 1950s, the Hartest Fair was held annually on St George's Day. Its origin was part of a national thanksgiving for George III's recovery from 'an afflictive malady'.

Hartest lacks some important facilities, most notably a general shop and outdoor recreational and sports facilities. High house prices and limited employment opportunities are making it increasingly difficult for young people to remain in the village or for potential newcomers to be able to live here. A major purpose of the Parish Plan is to address such issues.



How the project started & the activities of the Parish Plan Group

The proposal to prepare a Parish Plan was initiated, in the spring of 2003, by a group of four Hartest residents. At that time, they were acting in a purely informal capacity. They felt that the village might benefit from such an initiative and began to investigate some of the issues involved in developing a Parish Plan. They met several times to prepare a written proposal and held exploratory discussions with, among others, representatives of the Countryside Agency and Suffolk ACRE (Action for Communities in Rural Areas).

The proposal was first presented to the Hartest Parish Council in July 2003. A public meeting was convened by the Parish Council on 24 November 2003 and this was organised in association with the Rural Services Officer of Suffolk ACRE. Around 70 residents attended this meeting and, towards the end of the meeting, it was agreed by a majority of those present that preparation of a Parish Plan should go ahead.

At the end of the public meeting, names were taken of anyone interested in becoming involved in the preparation of the Parish Plan. These volunteers formed the Hartest Parish Plan Steering Group, later re-named as the Parish Plan Group (see list of members on page 2). The first meeting of this group took place on 3 December 2003. Since then, the Parish Plan Group has met on a regular basis to agree strategy and to coordinate the detailed work involved. The membership of the group includes two Parish Councillors who act as a direct link between the Parish Plan Group and the Parish Council.

An early task of the Parish Plan Group was to prepare a bid for funding to cover the main costs involved in

preparing the Plan. This grant application was submitted to the Countryside Agency in April 2004. At its meeting in April 2004, the Hartest Parish Council formally resolved to make a financial contribution.

On 12 May 2004 the Countryside Agency approved the application and a grant of £2180 was awarded. This enabled the Parish Plan Group to move ahead.

The main thrust of the work was then to consult with the residents of the village on various issues that were considered to be important to the community and to use the information gathered to formulate the Parish Plan. A questionnaire (in three parts) was drawn up and distributed to all households in the village. In this way all residents had an opportunity to contribute to the Plan by giving their views and opinions. In preparing the questionnaire, reference was made to those prepared by similar communities and we had some guidance from a workshop run by Suffolk ACRE. To ensure that the questions were relevant and tailored to the particular issues in Hartest, most of the questionnaire was put together by a small sub-group of the main Parish Plan Group.

The full text of the questionnaires used is given in Appendix A1 (see page 39) and readers are invited to refer to the introduction to Appendix A (page 36) for further information relating to the distribution and analysis of the questionnaires.

As part of the consultation process, an "Open Day" was held on 19 March 2005, in the Hartest Institute. Some of the preliminary results of the questionnaire were displayed. Three public discussion meetings were held in April 2005.

These allowed exploration of some issues raised in the questionnaire to be carried out in greater depth. In July 2005, letters were circulated to the various village organisations, inviting their views and comments on any particular aspect that had been highlighted by the questionnaire or which members of that organisation wished to emphasise. On page 2 we list those organisations that contributed views in this way.

The responses to the different approaches to consultation with residents of the village are summarised on pages 16 to 33, and from this, a series of Action Plan recommendations has been drawn up. These are summarised on page 8.

Throughout the process, reports have been passed to the Hartest Parish Council for consideration at their formal meetings and brief informal reports have been published in "Contact" (the parish magazine). More detailed consideration of the Parish Plan report and recommendations for the Action Plan was given by the Parish Council at meetings in September and November 2005 and finally in January 2006.

The main costs that have been incurred are for the printing of the questionnaire and the final report of the Action Plan. Public meetings have been held in the Hartest Institute. All work carried out by the members of the Parish Plan Group has been done on a voluntary basis.

Finally, to complete the process, the Parish Plan report will be delivered to every household in the spring 2006. Public meetings to discuss future action will follow.



The aims of the Parish Plan

In preparing the Plan, the Parish Plan Group has kept in mind a number of specific aims. These are summarised below.

- To undertake an extensive programme of consultation and through this to reflect accurately the views of the residents of the village and of those organisations active in the village
- To seek to preserve what has been called “unique and special” about Hartest
- To focus on the concept of self-help, encouraging interaction within the village community
- To encourage Hartest to be as self-reliant as possible, in this way meeting local needs locally where this can be achieved
- To promote the efficient use of resources and to limit pollution
- To encourage the development of relationships with others, including neighbouring parishes and those responsible for delivering services
- To identify financial and other resources that may in due course be attracted to the village for the benefit of residents
- To encourage “a sense of vision”, and consider innovative ways in which the quality of life in Hartest may be enhanced



Consultation responses & development of the Action Plan



This section summarises the responses to our various methods of consultation: through the household questionnaire, at the Open Day (19 March 2005), in the three public discussion groups held during April 2005, and specific comments from certain organisations and groups within the village. We have used evidence from these different sources to help develop the Action Plan.

The questionnaire was divided into sections: section A (Household), sections B to L (for individual adults) and section Y (for youths). The ten sections (B to L) proved useful as a means of collecting and processing information, but in later discussions it became more convenient to consider the findings under three broader headings (as used for the discussion groups), listed below.

Social issues

- Leisure (E)
- Community help and support (F)
- Religion (J)
- The school and the community (K)
- The Parish Council and local government (L)

Environmental issues

- Transport and communication (C)
- The village environment (G)

Economic issues

- Business or work based in Hartest (D)
- Retail and allied facilities (H)

We have used these same headings in our summary. However, the Parish Plan Group did not wish to treat these as rigid boundaries and was aware of the interconnections between different aspects of the proposals for the Action Plan. We hope that any future action will be sensitive to ways in which different activities or developments within the village can be integrated.

At the end of each section, Action Plan recommendations are highlighted. These recommendations are summarised on page 8.

The responses to the Youth questionnaire (section Y) and to the Household questionnaire (section A) are summarised in separate sections (on pages 30 and 32).

Readers should refer to Appendix A (page 36), which reproduces complete versions of each questionnaire thus giving all the questions, together with details of the totals for the replies to all the "numerical" questions (Appendix A1). A summary of the responses to the various comment and opinion questions is given in Appendix A2.

Within this section, references to particular questions in the different sections of the questionnaire are described as QuE1, QuE2 etc.

Note that on all bar charts included in this Response section, the numbers on the vertical axes represent actual numbers of responses on the individual questionnaires. No attempt has been made to convert these numbers into percentages.

Social issues

Leisure

(Section E of the questionnaire)

Within the village our existing recreational activities are generally well supported (Qu E1). Most clubs and groups also benefit from having members from neighbouring villages. Responses to some suggestions for new activities in the village are summarised in the bar chart for Qu E2.

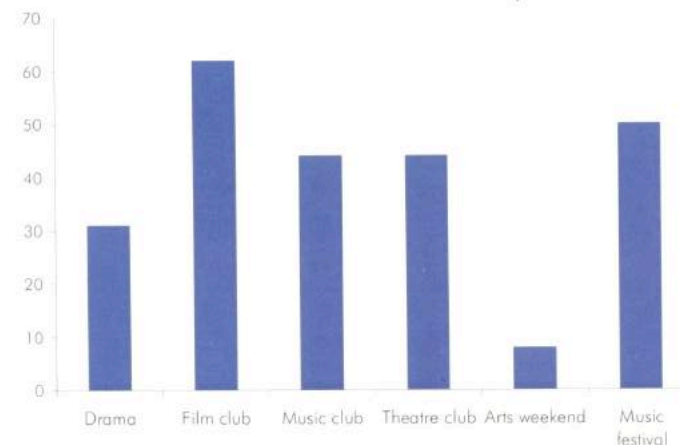
Many other ideas were suggested, including dancing, quiz nights, a book club, walking and rambling, jazz, photography, a historical society, series of occasional lectures or talks, theatre visits . . . to mention but a few.

These figures and comments indicate that there is considerable support for the development of a wider range of recreational activities. Indeed, it is encouraging to see that the Hartest Cinema has now been successfully established, with monthly meetings in the Institute during most of the year.

In particular, at the Open meetings and within the Parish Plan Group there have been enthusiastic and lively discussions in favour of staging a music festival (or arts weekend), to include, for example, chamber music, poetry readings and art and craft displays. If successful, such an event could be repeated in future years, or it could lead to smaller scale events at intervals during the year.

The Boxted and Hartest Institute is the natural home for many activities and we are pleased that the Trustees (in a letter to the Parish Plan Group) stated that they "would encourage developments . . . such as music clubs or even a musical or similar festival". In a similar vein, both the Church and Hartest Primary School expressed a desire for their buildings to be used more widely for community events.

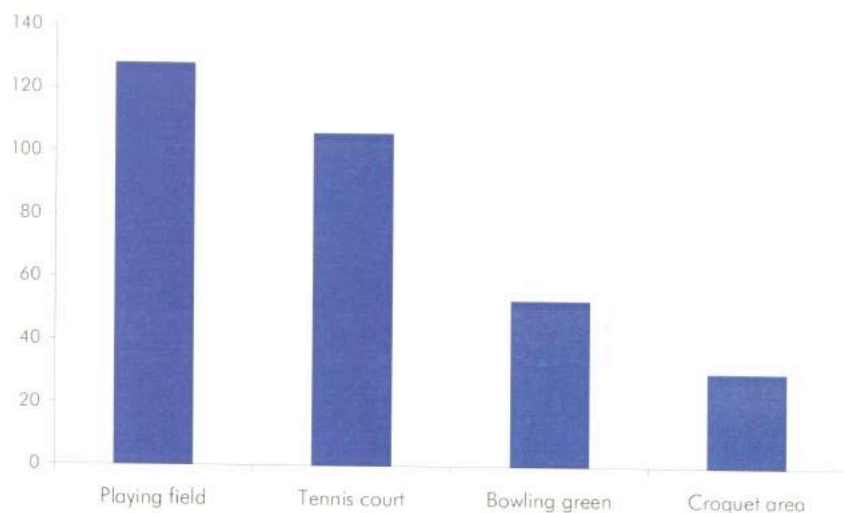
A suggestion from the Parochial Church Council (PCC) to remove some rear pews to encourage more social events in the Church is seen as a positive step and links with the strong support given in Qu J3 for Hartest Church being a focal point in the village. In the school, the new computer room will offer accommodation to the wider community for computer and other activities. In the future, the planned pre-school accommodation is also likely to offer a place for a range of other activities within the village.



Qu E2 - Ideas for new activities in the village

Questions concerned with the provision of specific sports and related recreational facilities within the village (Qus E10 and E12) showed strong support for some activities, in particular for a playing field and tennis court. Several comments emphasised the importance of catering for the needs of young people and this is borne out by comments in the Youth section (Qu Y12).

If a sports field is to be developed, a major issue will be to find a suitable location close to the centre of the village. A number of possible sites were suggested (Qu E11) but these are not quoted in the report as some are in private ownership and it would be inappropriate to presume that the owner(s) would wish to dispose of their land in this way. To take this proposal forward, we hope that future



Qus E10 & E12 - Recreational activities

discussion and negotiation could lead to a suitable site being found. Responses to Qu G9 did show support for use of part of the Green as a football or play area (as was the practice in relatively recent years).

A large number of people do grow their own vegetables and fruit and a number stated that they would like to have an allotment for gardening (Qus E13 & 14). As in the case of the playing field (see above) provision of allotments would require release of suitable land and we understand that this is a matter that could be taken up by the Parish Council. Any such site should be close to the village and have access to water.

There was some support for community sharing of certain items, including a shredder, the bulk ordering of garden supplies and a fruit press (Qu E15). In particular, the idea of an "apple pressing" day could be a way of encouraging social interaction between interested people (see section F). This might lead to the planting of a community orchard and also link with the desire to develop a community composting scheme (Qu G15).

Action Plan recommendation
To explore ways of extending the range of leisure activities and the development of sports facilities in the village

Community help and support

(Section F of the questionnaire)

While there was support for setting up groups to encourage more social interaction in the village (Qu F1), a similar number felt there was no need. An appreciable number of comments point out that this sort of interaction already exists informally, and that people would not wish to formalise it. However, in the Parish Plan Group there were concerns that the existing network might not reach all in the community, some of whom would like to have more opportunities for social interaction.

Elsewhere are various suggestions for activities that would help improve aspects of social interaction for a wider range of people. These suggestions include a community shop and post office, sports field or playground, meeting for lunch during the week, a weekend parent and child group, craft workshops, talks of local interest and even the apple pressing day or composting unit.

The establishment of a "good neighbour scheme" was, in principle, supported by over 100 people, with a similar number saying they would be willing to participate or offer help in such a scheme (Qus F2 & F3). Specific requests for help were fewer in number, though help with gardening and cleaning were the most frequent requests (Qu F4). To move this forward there would need to be a way of identifying people willing to offer their help and those who require it. There would be scope for linking this with a car sharing scheme (see transport in section C).

It was pleasing to see that, for the majority of people, there were no real concerns over local health facilities nor about policing, antisocial behaviour or crime in the village (Qus F7, F8, F9 & F10). However, some people did express concerns about policing, antisocial behaviour and crime and these concerns are reflected in the data shown in the bar charts for these questions (see page 20).

In a letter to the Parish Plan Group, the doctors of the Hartest surgery said that they were pleased with the level of support and for the opportunity to add to the comments in the Parish Plan. They confirmed that they wish to continue to provide a surgery in Hartest and at the same time look for further ways to meet the needs of patients. They did, however, indicate that, for reasons of time and cost, it is not possible for the surgery to be open for longer hours, and regret that occasional closures do occur.

In the comments, many people pointed out that a police presence is rarely seen in Hartest and a few did register their concerns in this respect. Further comments in this section referred to the problem of speeding traffic, which is considered in more detail in section G(b) relating to the village environment. A Neighbourhood Watch scheme has recently been established with a brief to monitor the situation. The Coordinator of this scheme also provides a link with the local beat officers.

Action Plan recommendation
To explore ways in which self-help can be extended in the village for the mutual benefit of residents



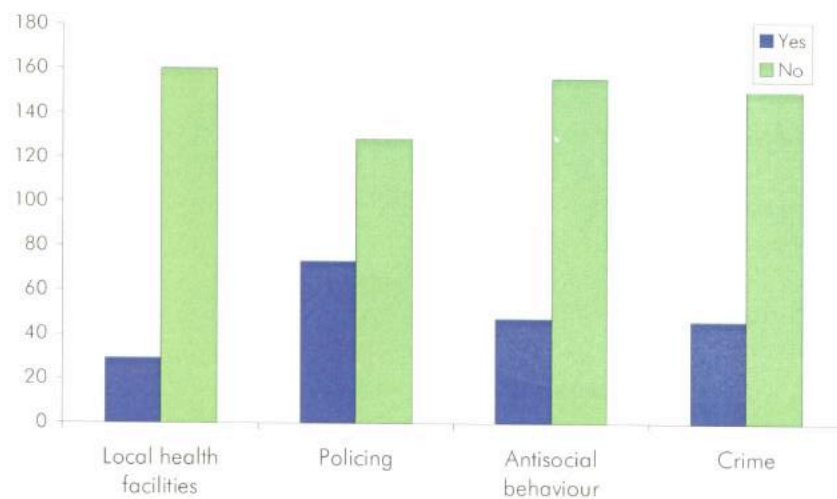
Religion

(Section J of the questionnaire)

The Hartest Church services are well supported for special services and there is an active Children's Church, but the number of regular worshippers is relatively small (Qu J1). In a similar way some (but fewer) attend services at Churches outside the village. These other locations include a number of Roman Catholic Churches (Lawshall, Bury St Edmunds), the Cathedral in Bury St Edmunds and Ely Cathedral.

Responses showed that many more people value the Church as a historic building and see its potential as a

focal point for the community (Qu J3). As stated in the Leisure section above (section E), it is encouraging that the Parochial Church Council (PCC) has suggested that it may decide to remove some of the rear pews to encourage more socialising at events (such as concerts) in the Church. We see this as a positive step towards bringing a wider range of people from the community into the Church for a variety of activities. The statement from the PCC also emphasises that the Church is "open all day, every day and offers a place of quiet spiritual peace to all". While a number of comments talked enthusiastically about the sense of community amongst those who attend the Church services, some voiced a feeling of exclusion when joining a service. We hope that the proposals for wider use of the Church building for other activities (particularly in relation to the arts and music) will be taken forward, thereby integrating this historic and sacred space more closely into life in the village.



Qus F7, F8, F9 & F10 - Village concerns

Action Plan recommendation

To explore ways of making greater use of the Church, particularly for events such as concerts or art and craft displays

The school and the community

(Section K of the questionnaire)

The various suggestions put forward in the questionnaire were the result of discussions with the Head Teacher at the time the questionnaire was being compiled. The questions are in three groups: firstly relating to activities directly with children that could be shared by people in the village (Qu K1); secondly, use of school grounds for sporting activities (Qu K2) and thirdly, other ways that people in the community could benefit from using the school facilities, buildings and grounds (Qu K3).

The responses gave substantial support to all three groups of suggestions (with around 100 positive responses for all of the suggestions in the first two groups). There were, however, some reservations, for example on the grounds that these activities should be the responsibility of the education department rather than people from the village or that this would incur increased security risks. As stated in the Leisure section, it is encouraging that interested parties (within the school and the current leaders of the Pre-School) do wish to share facilities and buildings with others in the community and make it possible to offer a wider range of activities within the school premises.

Action Plan recommendation

To follow up suggestions already made and to continue to make greater use of the school and its facilities and to encourage more participation of residents with the work of the school

The Parish Council and local government

(Section L of the questionnaire)

Responses suggest relatively little involvement of people in the village with Parish Council or local government activities, particularly regarding attendance at meetings (Qu L1). Most get some information about Parish Council matters from Contact magazine (Qu L2). Issues most likely to arouse interest are those relating to planning applications, use of the Green and concern over the state of the roads and pathways within the village.

Among the adverse comments were some that pointed out how the achievements of the Parish Council are seen to be rather limited and often long in coming to fruition, and that Council meetings tend to be too long and infrequent. However, there were some positive comments, and a number did appreciate that the powers (and funds) of the Parish Council are limited. Some saw the Parish Plan project as an opportunity for a wider range of people from the village to work more closely with the Parish Council.

Action Plan recommendation

To use the Parish Plan as an opportunity to forge a closer working relationship between the Parish Council and the village, as a means of taking forward some of the proposed recommendations





Environmental issues

Transport and communication

(Section C of the questionnaire)

The pattern of responses shows heavy dependence on the motor car as the main means of transport, both to work or study, and to shopping or leisure (Qu C1). Relatively few are frequent users of the public bus, but comments suggest a larger number would support the public services if perceived obstacles were overcome. The main restrictions seemed to be the limited timetable (frequency as well as routing), lack of services in the evening and on Sundays, and for some there were difficulties in getting access to the timetables.

Various suggestions were made for looking at ways of making public or shared transport available in a way that would respond to users' needs. It was clear that, for some people, this would offer a welcome alternative to use of the car. Extensions of schemes such as "dial-a-ride" and car sharing could be attractive to some people unable to use a car and to some existing car drivers. Small buses were preferred to the large double-decker buses currently used on some routes.

Action Plan recommendation

To explore ways in which public and other shared transport schemes could be improved for the village and surrounding areas, thereby reducing the dependence on private motor cars

With respect to other forms of communication (by Internet and telephone), a high proportion of residents have a computer with access to Internet at home (Qu C4). An appreciable number expressed a desire for Broadband, and we are able to report that this arrived in the village in March 2005. It appears that virtually all residents in Hartest have a telephone (land line) and a high proportion also have a mobile (Qu C8). However, it was noted that reception for mobiles is often poor and coverage is very patchy. Best reception is generally from Orange, T-mobile, Virgin and Vodaphone. People have mixed feelings about the desire for more masts to improve reception in the area. This highlights the need, at a national level, for the establishment of roaming facilities. Relatively few report use of the public call box - now a listed building, so presumably here to stay.

There were some comments about the poor quality of TV or radio reception, which could become an issue when digital transmission replaces analogue.

Action Plan recommendation

To draw attention to the lack of reliable mobile phone reception and find ways to encourage the introduction of roaming facilities nationally to help bring about the improvement of this and other digital communications

The village environment

(Section G of the questionnaire)

(a) Housing in the village

Responses indicate concerns that there is a need for low-cost housing (for purchase and to rent) but show little support for further luxury style housing (Qu G1). Some evidence of the need for low-cost housing is also given in Qu G2. This does not, however, reflect others who may wish to come to live in Hartest but are effectively denied access on account of the lack of available "affordable" housing.

An informal review of approximate property values in Hartest was undertaken during September 2005. This survey covered 194 properties in the village and the average value per property was thought to be in the region of £390 000. This value is more than double that in Babergh as a whole (which itself is higher than the average for both Suffolk and East Anglia). Values ranged from around £100 000 to a few over £1 million. Most lay between £250 000 and £500 000. These figures emphasise the high cost of houses and the consequent imbalance within the community. As noted above, this is likely to deter potential newcomers to Hartest who might be seeking low-cost housing.

This barrier applies both to younger first-time buyers and to older people looking for smaller or sheltered accommodation. If the issue of provision of low-cost housing is to be taken forward, it immediately raises the question of finding suitable sites, within or close to the village centre as there are only a limited number of

brownfield sites. While a number of possible sites were suggested (Qu G4), these are not quoted in the report as some are in private ownership and it would be inappropriate to presume that the owner(s) would wish to dispose of their land in this way. A number of comments (Qus G4 & G5) reflected resistance to further development in any form inside or close to the village.

Low-cost housing is usually provided by outside agencies, such as developers or housing associations. Other models do exist and Hartest could offer an opportunity to utilise local expertise to fulfil the perceived needs of the village and exert greater control over what happens. In favour of some development, a number of positive comments (particularly in Qu G6) can be summarised under the description of a "sensibly designed mixed development, sympathetic to the existing environment".

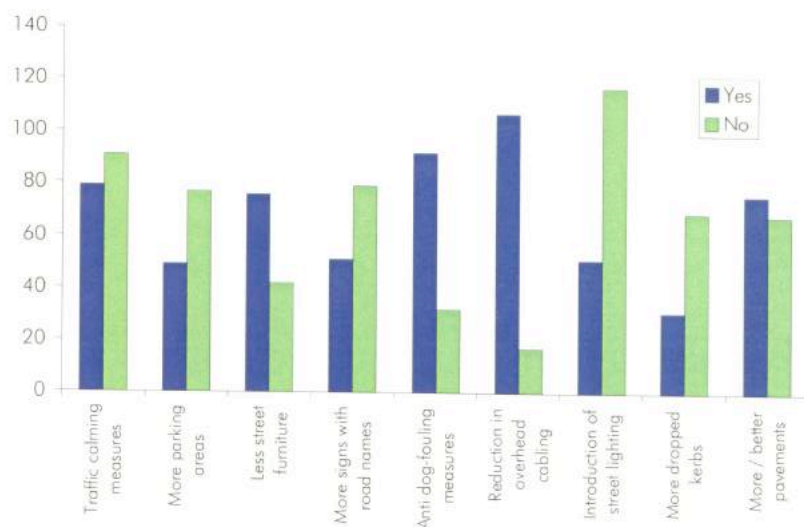
A Working Group could be set up to take this forward, perhaps under the direction of a Village Trust, if this suggestion goes ahead (see page 35). Such a group could look more closely at the issues involved and the feasibility of appropriate housing development to satisfy the perceived needs and to encourage cohesiveness within the community.

Action Plan recommendation

To explore ways in which some low-cost housing could be provided within the village

(b) The village environment

The high number of responses to the questions about specific features in (and possible changes to) the village environment indicates considerable interest in these various topics. Answers are summarised in the bar chart for Qu G7. Perusal of these data suggests, for example, strong interest in favour of reduction of the amount of overhead cabling, and more than twice as many people are against street lighting as are for it. However, for other features (such as traffic calming measures and more / better pavements), opinions are more equally divided. Further comments were made in response to Qu G8.



Qu G7 - Features in the village environment

Rather than propose action on any individual items in the list, we would hope that the opinions will be considered in and contribute to any wider schemes that might be discussed, for example by a village environment Working Group. Such a group could look at a range of schemes (including some in operation elsewhere) for management of cars and pedestrians within the village, and could take account of different issues, including those relating to speeding in the village, pavements, traffic calming and parking.

Action Plan recommendation

To explore ways in which schemes could be developed to reduce the impact of traffic and to make the village safer and more pleasant for pedestrians, and at the same time improve the village environment for residents

(c) Open spaces within the village

The importance of the Green as a focal point in the village was emphasised by the high number of responses in favour of keeping it as an open space and social area (Qu G9). Support shown for part to be used for football or as a play area is referred to in the Leisure section (section E). There was also interest in the suggestion of keeping a small area of the Green to be managed in a way that would encourage wild flowers. This could, therefore, be considered in the wider context of the village environment and its management. It was recognised that the management of a wild flower area has the potential to be undertaken as a shared community activity, encouraging social interaction (see Section F) and that it could be of educational value for children at the school.

Many of the comments (Qus G9 & 10) reiterate the importance of the Green to the village and the desire of residents to leave it as it is. This is linked with a fear of any form of "suburbanisation" and loss of its rural character. There were, however, a number of concerns relating, for example, to parking on the Green, access to houses adjacent to the Green, erosion of the Green and traffic speeding in the vicinity. Resistance to street lighting and consequent light pollution was also frequently mentioned. A number of responses supported the idea of more seats or benches on the Green, as a means of encouraging people to meet and socialise there. People also favoured using the Green as a venue for holding larger events.

Hartest Parish Council owns the Green on behalf of the village and is responsible for its management and maintenance. The Parish Council is currently discussing

proposals for the Green, with reference in particular to the erosion of the Green, the siting of roadways, the condition of the road surfaces and parking. We would hope that the Council will give consideration to the questionnaire responses from residents and that these will be taken into account in any future proposals for changes to the Green. There is also scope for linking this with discussions relating to the management of cars and pedestrians in the village (see section Gb, above).

A relatively high number of people said they would like to see more trees or hedges planted within the village, though some did not support this (Qu G11). Possible sites for planting included all roads leading into the village (Qu G12).

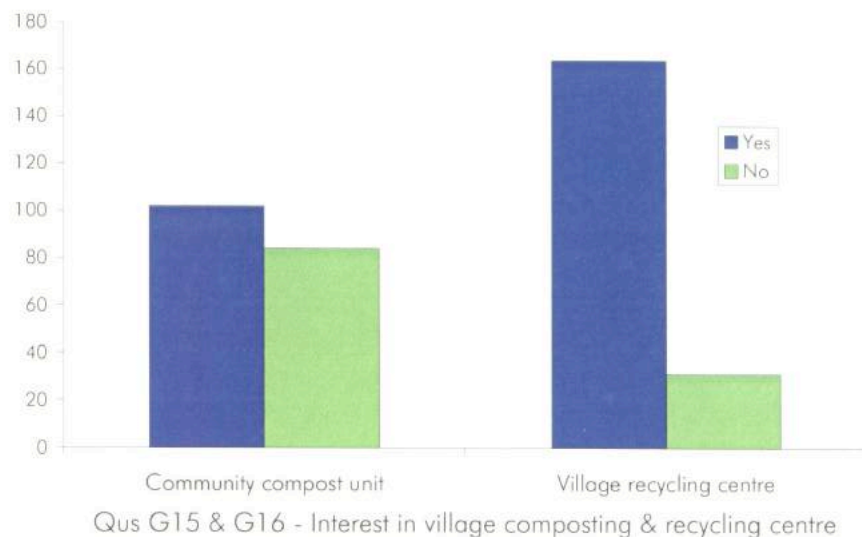
Provision of allotments (Qus G13 & 14) is considered with Qus E13 and 14 (see Leisure section). A further group of questions (Qus G15 to G17) referred to environmental issues, including compost and recycling units. Responses showed strong interest in and support for development of both a compost unit and a recycling centre in the village.

An appreciable number of people questioned why the bottle and paper banks had been removed and expressed a desire for their return. Comments also showed a number of people were interested in pursuing renewable energy initiatives, including a village woodland for firewood, wind power options (for and against) and a village biodiesel scheme. These responses may provide an opportunity for the Renewable Energy Group and the Composting Group to revive their activities and look for ways to implement some of these suggestions within the village.



Action Plan recommendations

1. To inform the Parish Council of the views of village residents, as expressed in the questionnaire, concerning the development of any schemes in future to conserve, manage and use the Green as well as the wider village environment
2. To find ways of making greater use of alternative energy in the village and explore the feasibility of establishing a recycling centre and compost unit



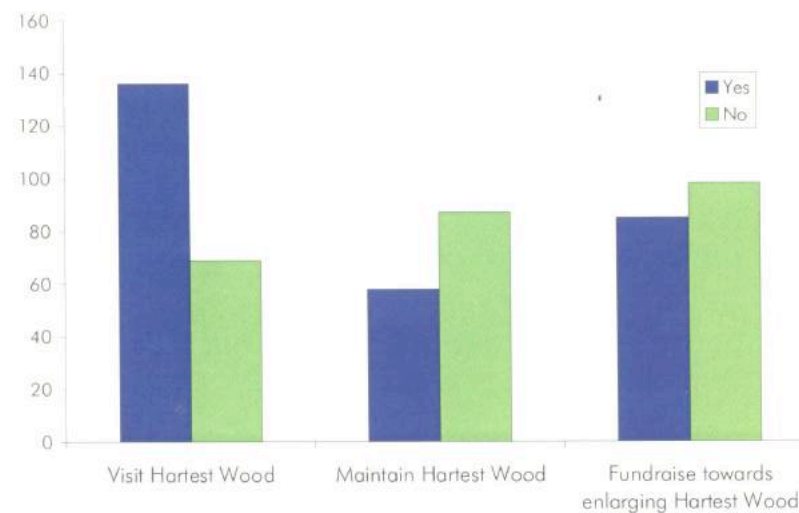
(d) The countryside around the village

Responses indicated that the network of footpaths around the village is used by a large number of people and many said they use them frequently (Qus G18 & 19). There were some concerns relating, for example, to their muddy condition (in winter or after wet weather), that some were ploughed over or fouled by dogs and horses and there were a few complaints of their being damaged by 4 x 4 vehicles or motor cycles. Most users, however, were appreciative of the network and the opportunities the footpaths offered for walking in the countryside (Qu G20). Responsibility for maintenance of the footpaths lies with the Rights of Way division of Suffolk County Council and the Parish Plan Group would hope that these responses would contribute to any action on footpaths in the vicinity of the village in the future.

The relatively high interest in visiting the wood is shown in the bar chart for combined Qus G20, G21 & G22 and while only some are willing to help with maintenance jobs, a significant number would support enlarging the wood and helping with fundraising for it. When the original proposal was put forward (in 1999), only a small number gave financial support at that time, but it has proved to be an asset now enjoyed by a much larger number of Hartest residents. The wood is owned by the Woodland Trust and in the light of these responses, we hope that the Management Committee for the wood, would wish to explore the possibility of extending the area of woodland. With suitable management, the wood could also provide a source of locally produced firewood as fuel to be used by people in the village (see also responses to Qu G17).

Action Plan recommendations

1. To encourage the Suffolk County Council to take note of the various comments relating to footpaths within the village
2. To explore the possibility of obtaining more land within the parish of Hartest to develop woodland that, with suitable management, could also provide a source of locally produced firewood to supply fuel for the village



Qus G21, G22 & G23 - Hartest Wood



Economic issues

Business or work based in Hartest

(Section D of the questionnaire)

The questionnaire asked for information only from those who run a business or work from home full-time in Hartest, so did not gather information about those who work part-time from home. The nature of the business or work indicated a wide range of skills (see summary of comments). Most who responded seemed satisfied with their facilities for working in Hartest. There were, however, some feelings of isolation (which could be remedied by occasionally meeting for lunch during the working day), and a few other frustrations. In one of the discussion groups, there was some interest in development of local business premises, which could take advantage of shared facilities, in particular providing a courier drop off point - it seemed that signing for deliveries can become one of the most stressful points of the working week! Generally it was felt that there is scope for greater cooperation between those working at home, and that this could help provide a means of encouraging self-sufficiency in the village.

Action Plan recommendations

To explore the possibility of developing local business premises with some shared facilities that could also encourage a wider range of people into the village for employment

Retail and allied facilities

(Section H of the questionnaire)

The pattern of shopping (for food and other household items) showed heavy dependence on supermarkets with some use of local shops or street markets where available but relatively small use of the Internet (Qu H1). Bury St Edmunds was the most popular place for all types of shopping listed, though some use of the Internet was evident, particularly for books (Qu H2).

There was considerable support for the establishment of a village shop and post office (Qus H4 to H7). In recent years there has been no general store or post office in Hartest, so the questionnaire asked which of a selection of items people would be likely to buy at a new village shop, in the event of it being established. Responses are summarised in the bar chart for Qu H4.

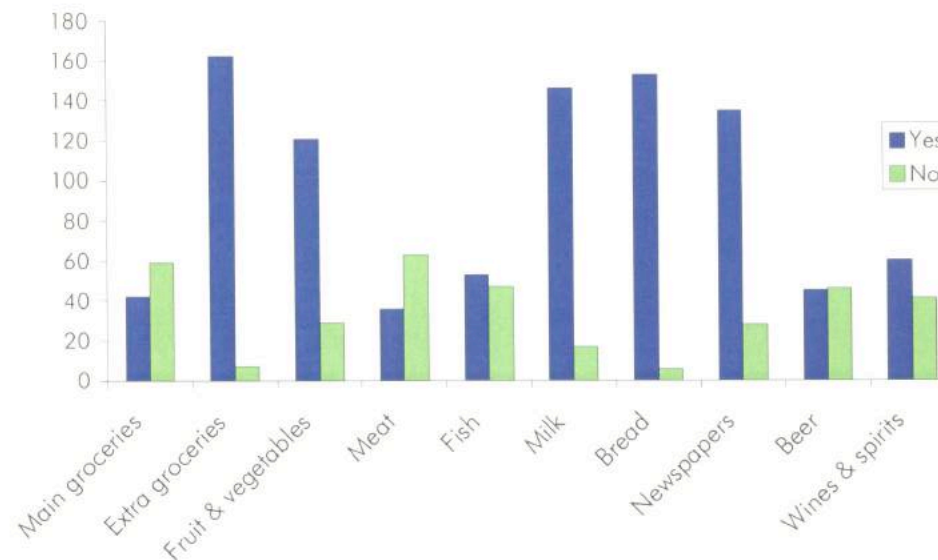
In addition to those items listed, other comments suggested some sort of delicatessen, stationery supplies (including cards), mobile phone top-ups, a dry cleaning and laundry agency and linking the shop to a tea or coffee shop. There was some support for there being photocopying facilities but less for fax and Internet access. A number of people commented on the additional value of such a facility as a means for social interaction. Relatively high numbers anticipate that they would buy a range of items from the shop and an appreciable number (just under half of those who responded) also indicate that they would be willing to be actively involved, through financial support or voluntary help in the shop. As with other possible ventures within the village, it would be essential to find a suitable location, close to the centre of the village. A number of possible

sites were suggested, but these are not quoted in the report as some are in private ownership and it would be inappropriate to presume that the owner(s) would wish to dispose of the land or property in this way.

High numbers of people use the butchers in Hartest, many apparently in preference to supermarkets (Qus H8 and H4). This suggests that people may prefer local shops where available, rather than being totally dependent on supermarkets. For both a shop and a farmer's market, it would be important to attract people from a wider area to ensure their viability.

There was considerable support for a farmer's market, say on a weekly basis (Qu H9). However, views put forward at one of the discussion groups emphasised the need to be realistic in terms of the range of items that could be available for the relatively small population of Hartest. A local shop or farmer's market could, however, become a means of encouraging and distributing locally produced vegetables and fruits, including organic produce.

Other village facilities referred to in the questionnaire included the garage and the pub. A reasonable number use the local garage for servicing, occasional repairs and



Qu H4 - Likely purchases from village shop



MOT preparation, though the majority appear to use garage services outside the village (Qu H11).

The pub (The Crown) enjoys a fair amount of support from local people, some visiting frequently and more on an occasional basis (about once a month) (Qu H12). Taking meals at the pub seemed to be more popular than drinking. The comments suggest that the pub has a lot to offer with the potential to offer more, in particular to encourage a wider range of people to visit the pub and use it as a place for social interaction within the village. Ideas included a lunch club (say for people working in Hartest during the day), a coffee or other meeting place, links to a shop and post office, more social "events" such as "themed" evenings or jazz, country and western.

It is clear that a large number of people in the village take "Contact" and that, for most people, it acts as an important source of information (Qu H15).

Action Plan recommendations

1. To set up a Working Group to explore ways of establishing a community shop in Hartest including the viability of such a proposal
2. To explore ways in which The Crown might become more involved in the development of further amenities in the village

Youth questionnaire

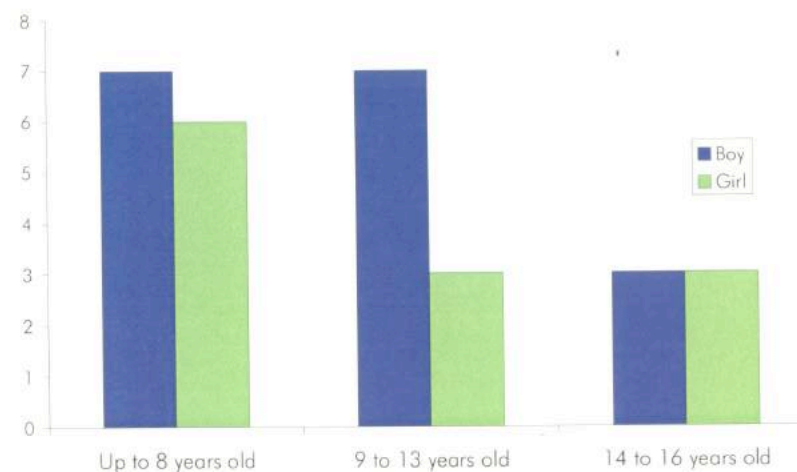
This questionnaire was specifically for young people, under the age of 17. The age profile and distribution between boys and girls for the 29 who responded to the Youth questionnaire are shown in bar chart Qu Y2. Most attend the local authority schools, in Hartest, Clare, Bury St Edmunds or Sudbury as appropriate for their age group (Qu Y3). About one-quarter attend private schools, mostly within Suffolk. For travelling to school, about half go by bus and half by car, and just a few are within walking distance of Hartest school (Qu Y5). Relatively few have a part-time job though some quoted jobs they have done in the past. Most envisage continuing to A levels or equivalent at school or college (Qu Y8).

The most popular activities are football, biking and swimming but they enjoy a good variety of other activities, including drama, music, fishing, cinema and other sports. If they go outside Hartest, most go to Bury St Edmunds, but some go also to Sudbury, Long Melford, Colchester or other destinations (including Brockley for the Cricket Club). Only one-third of those who answered said that they go to the Youth Club in Hartest (Qu Y11) and this may be partly a reflection of their age range. Other activities that they would like to be available in the village (Qu Y12) show highest support for a playground (for young children), and a playing field and swimming pool. Other ideas included a skate park, an all-weather multi-purpose pitch, BMX track and a tennis wall. Some further suggestions for activities are given in Qu Y13, and these include a toy shop and village shop, cycling club, junior film club, an art club and basketball facilities.

For other activities outside the village, Bury St Edmunds and Sudbury are visited more frequently than Ipswich or Cambridge. Shopping seems to be the most popular activity with visits to clubs or cinemas taking place only occasionally (Qu Y14). About one-third go to Church in the village, and some indicated that they would like more involvement with or more activities to take place in the Church (Qus Y16 and 17).

Some quite thoughtful comments were given in Qus Y17 and Y18. Most seemed to enjoy living in Hartest because it is quiet and peaceful. They said that people are friendly or their friends live nearby and they enjoy the playground in the pub and being in the countryside. There were some negative comments, suggesting there is little to do. There was a demand for a shop in the village, particularly for sweets and some wanted a toy shop and pet shop. Some commented on the limitations of the bus service and a few spoke against any large scale housing development that might alter the nature of the village of Hartest.

References to the Youth questionnaire suggestions are included in the Action Plan recommendations given in the summary earlier in this report and are not repeated separately here.

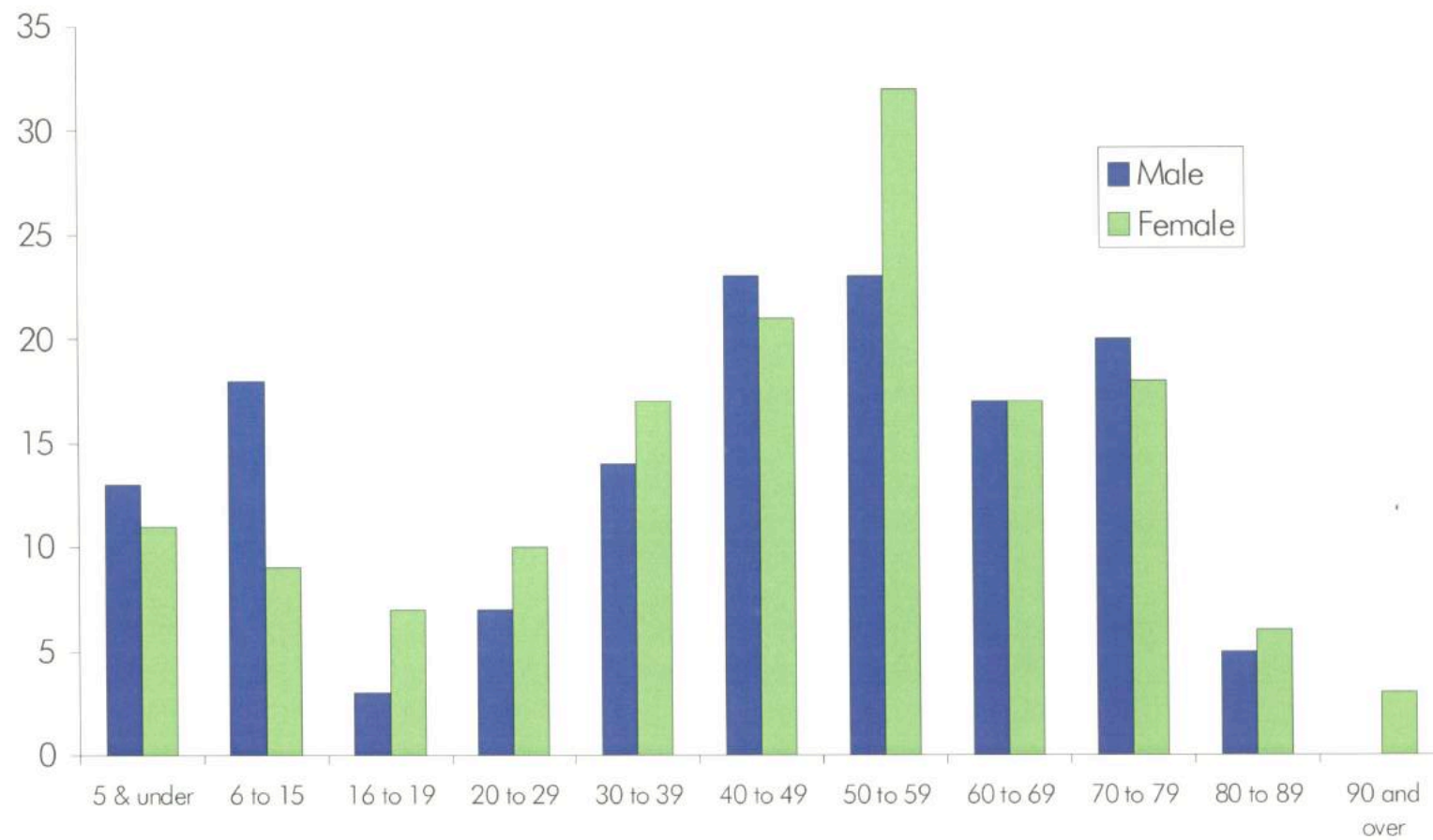


Qu Y2 - Youth gender & ages

Household questionnaire

(section A)

The responses given in the Household section of the questionnaire are mainly factual and are summarised in Appendix A1. The bar chart for Qu A3 reflects the age profile of the village and emphasises the weighting towards the older age groups. Note that the first three age groups have different sized categories compared to those in the groups aged 20 and over. The highest numbers (of both men and women) occur in the 50 to 59 age group. Some of the information given in this section is also used in the previous discussions, relating to different proposals and recommendations within the Action Plan.



Qu A3 - Gender & age of village population

The future



The task of the Hartest Parish Plan Group comes to an end with the publication of this report and the Action Plan recommendations. The work has been immensely stimulating and we finish on a note of optimism. We have been privileged to share the thoughts, suggestions and aspirations of the residents of Hartest, young and old. We now look to the future with the hope that many of the ideas generated and the Action Plan recommendations will, in time, be realised.

In presenting the report, we have endeavoured to reflect the views of the village, using evidence from the questionnaire responses and from the various discussions that have taken place. These discussions have been in public meetings, with the Parish Council and within the Parish Plan Group at its various meetings.

We could have asked other questions in the questionnaire. We did not, for example, ask questions about the cemetery nor did we seek information about part-time workers in the village. We scarcely touched on provision for the elderly, an issue that could be significant when we consider the relatively high number of people over 60 and link this with the high prices for houses in the village.

We are aware also that there are bigger issues that affect our daily lives. However, in preparing the report, we have used the questionnaire and the responses received as the basis for our interpretation of the view of the village and development of ideas for the future.

It is gratifying that some so-called "recommendations" are already coming to fruition. As examples, we can refer to the Hartest cinema, a lunch meeting (for those working or being at home all day), a local produce market and we know of a group that has had serious discussions about setting up a community orchard and a coppice woodland to generate a supply of firewood for the



village. The Parish Council website (www.hartest.com) is another feature that is being developed and is likely to become an increasingly important part of village communication in the future. Whether or not these initiatives would have occurred without the Parish Plan Group activities, we cannot say, but they do show that there are people in the village willing and able to act and take ideas forward for the benefit of the wider community.

However, we have to be realistic. Hartest is a small community, and people are already committed in many different ways in their everyday lives. Like other similar communities, we recognise limitations of numbers of people, of time, energy and of course funding. At this stage, in the Action Plan recommendations, we make no attempt to prioritise or give a time scale to likely or possible achievement of the goals. Some may happen relatively quickly, whereas others are likely to take years of negotiation, discussion and require access to considerable funding before they could be fulfilled.

Within the Parish Plan Group, the notion of a Village Trust has been discussed. We felt that this could be one way of taking forward some of the ideas embodied in the Action Plan. A Village Trust could act as an umbrella organisation to oversee the implementation of various recommendations in the Action Plan. We envisage a Village Trust as a voluntary group, made up of local people and registered as a charity. A Trust could help coordinate the activities of any Working Groups that may be set up and could also have the role of linking with the Parish Council or other agencies as may be required.

Finally, to return to what several people said in their comments. . . . we want to make Hartest even more special . . .

We now look forward to village meetings to give consideration to the Action Plan recommendations (summarised on page 8).



Appendices

Appendix A - The questionnaires

Distribution

In Hårfest there are 194 households, with a total of approximately 383 adults and an estimated 37 children or youths under the age of 18 years. A few houses were empty at the time of the survey, because they are used as second homes or for holiday lets. Attempts were made to deliver the appropriate questionnaire(s) to all residents. The full questionnaires are reproduced in Appendix A1, on pages 39 to 57. Each household had one "household" questionnaire (Section A) and a questionnaire booklet (Sections B to L) for each adult in the household. For households with children or youths between the ages of 5 and 16 (inclusive), a "youth" questionnaire (Section Y) was delivered, one for each young person.

Deliveries were made between late December 2004 and mid-January 2005, with a few late stragglers extending into February. All deliveries were made personally, by a member of the Parish Plan Group, who also gave a brief background to the householder as to the purpose of the questionnaire, and made arrangements for its collection (about two weeks later). Despite several attempts, no answer was obtained for a few households, so questionnaires were not delivered. A very few householders indicated that they did not wish to take part in the survey and refused to accept the questionnaire.

Questionnaires were also collected personally, usually by the same person who had delivered them.

At all stages, steps were taken to ensure the confidentiality of the information contained in the questionnaire responses and to protect the anonymity of the householders. This was emphasised on delivery and collection. Questionnaires were returned in blank sealed envelopes and no house or personal names were attached to the questionnaire. If people wished to give their name, so that they could be contacted for involvement in future activities or associated with particular comments, they were given the opportunity to do this by means of a blue "contact" sheet, collected separately from the main questionnaire. About 30 blue contact sheets were returned.

Method of analysis and some general comments on performance

On receipt, each questionnaire was given a number, incorporating the zone of the village from which it was collected. Preliminary responses were collated by zone, but for the overall analysis and final report, all information has been amalgamated. Even though some houses were empty at the time of the survey, returns indicate a 63.4% response.

Fewer than 10 of the collected questionnaires were returned blank - in some households a couple may have given joint replies, or an individual may have decided not to participate. On some questionnaires, only scattered questions were answered or relatively few comments made. However, for the bulk of the questionnaires, most questions were answered, often supported by a wide range of comments - occasionally extending to the blank pages at the end of the questionnaire.

For reference, the complete questionnaire is given in Appendix A1, on page 39. This also includes the final totals for the straightforward "numerical" answers (ticks in a box). Note that the numbers represent the numbers of ticks in any particular category (in the box or straight YES / NO answers). No attempt has been made to convert these into percentages - indeed this could mislead or distort the picture when interpreting the data. So throughout, we have recorded actual numbers and have been careful in our interpretation to ensure that the numbers are seen in context.

The majority of questions "worked well" and gave clear-cut answers. In just a few there appeared to be some ambiguities, and with hindsight, different wording might have been used. Many of the questions required simple ticks, or YES / NO decisions. We deliberately avoided the greater complexity of graded answers (say on a 5-point scale) but we accept that a "NO" response could indicate definite opposition to a suggestion, or perhaps just lack of interest. Both at the design stage and when we interpreted the data, we were aware of certain limitations, but in drawing out various suggestions or proposals, we have taken care not to manipulate the data or "read the mind" of the various respondents.

The open comments on the questionnaire

The design of the questionnaire gave many opportunities for free response in the form of comments. Some written comments duplicated or reinforced other more factual questions, whereas others put forward new suggestions, views or opinions. We have attempted to summarise this wealth of information in a form that is fair to the people

who wrote the comments, yet is presented in a way that is concise but still does justice to the range of opinion given. Initially all statements were recorded, then comments that covered similar ground were combined. The lists given in Appendix A2 (page 58) attempt to reflect all comments made, but such lists cannot be quantitative. However, those at the top of the list for a particular question were made most frequently and those at the bottom of the list were made only rarely or perhaps by one person (but see note for B2, on page 58).